



VOICES ACROSS WATER: FROM THE SIRENA PARTHENOPE TO HYDRONARRATIVES

NEW PERSPECTIVES ON LITERARY, LINGUISTIC,
AND CULTURAL REPRESENTATIONS

Graduate Conference

1ST EDITION

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Centro di Ricerca Interdipartimentale
per le Lingue e le Letterature Straniere

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Dipartimento di
Studi Economici
e Giuridici

CLA

Centro
Linguistico
di Ateneo





DATES TO REMEMBER

30.04.2025: DEADLINE FOR ABSTRACT SUBMISSION

31.05.2025: NOTIFICATION OF ACCEPTANCE

25.09.2025: CONFERENCE



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Graduate Conference
PhD Course in
“Linguistic, Terminological and Intercultural Studies”

Voices across Water: From the Sirena Parthenope to Hydronarratives.
New Perspectives on Literary, Linguistic, and Cultural Representations

University of Naples “Parthenope”
Naples, 25th September 2025

Steeped in the seabound legacy of the city of Naples and surrounded by the waters that have shaped its history, Parthenope University has long interwoven its identity with the study and promotion of marine and maritime studies. Founded in 1920 as a Royal Naval Institute, it only later took on the name ‘Parthenope’, evoking the mythological siren whose legend is inextricably linked to the city’s past. Since then, the sea has become the undisputed protagonist not only of numerous degree programs but also of a wide array of interdisciplinary projects, where scientific inquiry and humanistic reflection converge in seamless harmony.

In recent years, several initiatives enacted by the Interdepartmental Centre for Foreign Languages and Literatures (Centro Interdipartimentale per le Lingue e Letterature Straniere – CRILLS) and the PhD programme in “Linguistic, Terminological and Intercultural Studies” have explored the multifaceted dimensions of water within the Humanities. Some pertinent examples are “YourTerm MARE”, “ENVI-HUMA – *Environmental Humanities and Models of Sustainable Growth*”, and “*Littératie Océanique: Observations, Linguistiques, Données Terminologiques et Modélisations Informatiques basées sur Corpus*” (Ocean Literacy: Linguistic Observations, Terminological Databases, and ICT based on Corpus), together with a number of in-depth studies (e.g., Antinucci, Petrillo, 2017; Zollo, 2024).

These endeavours all explore the complexity of water as an environmental and historical legacy, while underscoring the critical need to investigate its linguistic, literary and cultural dimensions.

The conference *Voices across Water: From the Sirena Parthenope to Hydronarratives. New Perspectives on Literary, Linguistic, and Cultural Representations*, organised by the XXXVIII cycle of the PhD Course in “Linguistic, Terminological and Intercultural Studies”, aims to contribute to scholarly discourse by offering new insights into a topic that significantly contributes to the university’s identity: the emerging field of Hydrohumanities (De Wolff et al., 2022). This innovative field of research conceptualises water not merely as an object of study but also as a dynamic agent in constant interaction with human societies, thereby enriching contemporary debates on climate change and environmental justice. Within this framework, “wet ontology” (Steinberg, Peters, 2015) serves both as a compelling metaphor and a distinctive analytical lens, offering a means to interpret the fluid complexities of reality.



By challenging traditional, land-based and static perspectives, it advocates for a more dynamic, water-centred understanding of the world. Building upon Augustin Berque's worldview, our Graduate Conference seeks to foster a discussion on the intricate relationship between nature and society, humans and their environment. Aquatic landscapes are presented as dynamic, relational entities within an *existence paysagère* (Renouprez & Gravet, 2023), where collective symbolism imbues such elements with a distinctive identity and emblematic significance. By analysing the role and representation of the aquatic element across various narrative and discursive forms (literary, audio-visual, media-based) in Italian, English, French and Spanish, we aim to explore how its intrinsic characteristics – movement, depth and vastness – serve as a conceptual framework for understanding a wide range of human and cultural phenomena.

Recently grouped under the term *Hydronarratives*, these textual forms construe water as a symbol, a metaphor, and active agent in social and cultural dynamics (Oppermann, 2023). Water has long held a central role, serving as a conduit for travel, a territorial boundary, a source of sustenance and peril, or a powerful metaphor for transformation, emotion, and identity. This symbolism appears in renowned classics such as Homer's *Odyssey*, as well as in more contemporary works, including Melville's *Moby Dick* (1951), Hemingway's *The Old Man and the Sea* (1952), Verne's *Twenty Thousand Leagues Under the Sea* (1870), and Camus's *The Stranger* (1942).

In contemporary discourse, *Hydronarratives* are deeply intertwined with a range of cultural, social, and political phenomena, including migration, gender identity, environmental justice, and climate change. The sea represents both a formidable barrier and a paradoxical allure for those who are compelled to traverse it. Water emerges as a dual symbol representing the migrant's faith in a better future, while simultaneously foreshadowing the perils, suffering, and loss associated with displacement. The narratives of migrants, especially those who have crossed the Mediterranean, depict a journey that extends beyond physical passage, serving as a profound metaphor for broader existential and sociopolitical transformations (Hughes, 2019).

Water, with its inherent fluidity, has also become a powerful metaphor for understanding sexual and gender identity, as discussed by Amideo (2021). This metaphor allows for a nuanced and evocative exploration of the transformative and often fluid nature of queer identities.

Beyond its material significance, water holds profound symbolic value in postcolonial narratives, representing both a contested resource and a locus of power (Henry, 2022). For indigenous communities dispossessed of land and water, the aquatic environment becomes a vital space for resistance and the assertion of rights. Water, in this context, extends beyond its physical properties, embodying a force that transcends human control and governance.

The often-paradoxical nature of water positions it as a central theme in both fiction and media. In the context of climate change, experts are working to develop a precise scientific discourse to effectively communicate the risks and opportunities surrounding this vital resource. This effort is exemplified in initiatives aimed at promoting and preserving marine natural heritage (Zollo, 2024).



The conference welcomes interdisciplinary proposals in Italian, English, French, and Spanish that investigate the multifaceted role of water as both a social agent and a cognitive metaphor across diverse narrative forms. We invite submissions that explore how water shapes and reflects cultural values, social practices, and individual experiences.

Topics include but are not limited to:

- **Water and migration:** Water as a boundary, obstacle, and symbol of hope in sea migration narratives.
- **Water and gender identity:** Water as a metaphor in works exploring the fluidity of gender identity.
- **Water and postcolonialism:** Water as a contested resource and symbol of power in postcolonial narratives.
- **Water as character and landscape:** Water as a protagonist in literary and film works analysed from an ecocritical perspective.
- **Water and specialised languages:** Studies on the terminology used in sea-related domains (navigation, fishing, oceanography).
- **Water and public discourses:** Analysis of political, scientific, and media discourses on water and their impact.

Participation guidelines

PhD students and postdoctoral researchers with no more than one year of experience are invited to submit proposals for 20-minute presentations in Italian, English, French, or Spanish on the topics outlined above.

Applicants must submit an abstract (300 words) and a short bio note (100 words) in .doc format by **April 30, 2025**, to graduate.parthenope25@gmail.com. The file should be titled as follows: **Name_Surname_gc25**.

The working languages of the conference are **Italian, English, French, and Spanish**. All submissions will undergo an anonymous peer-review process conducted by members of the **Scientific-Organizing Committee** and the **Teaching Board of the PhD Program in Linguistic, Terminological, and Intercultural Studies**. Notification of acceptance will be communicated by **May 31, 2025**.

General information

The conference will take place exclusively onsite on 25 September 2025 at Parthenope University of Naples. Information regarding registration, conference venue and the final programme will be available at [<https://www.graduateconferenceparthenope.it>]. For any further information, please send an email to (graduate.parthenope25@gmail.com).

Dates to remember:

- **30/04/2025:** Deadline for abstract submission.
- **31/05/2025:** Notification of acceptance.
- **25/09/2025:** Conference.



Scientific-Organising Committee:

Candida Basile Baldassarre, Alessia Battista, Virginia Carrella, Marco Cimini, Vittorio Di Mauro, Chiara Effuso, Daniela Giordano, Fabrizio Liguori, Carla Manno, Adriana Marinelli, Claudia Palumbo, Francesca Panajo, Roberto Petrazzuolo, Wanda Punzi Zarino, Maria Chiara Salvatore, Giuseppe Vitale.

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